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ABSTRACT

Change is in the offing for the entire educational system in Maine, especially for the vocational education system. Observations about the present state of vocational education in the state are offered, and recommendations are made to improve the program. Recommendations include the following: (1) establishment of a comprehensive research section in the Bureau of Adult and Secondary Vocational Education to provide analytical data for use in evaluating existing programs and new initiatives; (2) creation of a program to support in-school youth and dropouts in attaining employment; (3) development of career education for all grade levels; (4) preparation of a plan to identify the inservice needs of vocational educators and develop strategies to address them; (5) establishment of standards to certify vocational teachers; (6) development of strategies to implement change in the delivery of secondary vocational education; (7) review of modes of delivery of vocational education with an eye toward needed changes; (8) change of the secondary vocational education system to a competency-based system; and (9) development of a new vocational education delivery system to meet the new needs of students. These recommendations are offered to provoke thought that will lead to new opportunities for Maine's secondary vocational education students. A list of 24 references is included. (KC)

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Concept Paper
For the
Commissioner's
Task Force to Study
Secondary
Vocational Education
In Maine

Revised Edition
10/16/87

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CHANGE IS IN THE OFFING

New Opportunities For Secondary Vocational Education In the State of Maine

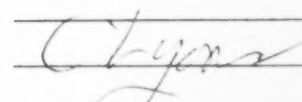
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**COMMISSIONER'S
TASK FORCE
TO STUDY
SECONDARY
VOCATIONAL
EDUCATION
IN MAINE**

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TO: Members, Commissioner's Task Force to Study
Secondary Vocational Education in Maine

FROM: William H. Cassidy, Associate Commissioner
Bureau of Adult & Secondary Vocational Education

DATE: September 9, 1987

RE: CHANGE IS IN THE OFFING

The secondary vocational education system is a vital component of the educational spectrum within the state of Maine.

However, change is in the offing...change not only for secondary vocational education but change throughout the entire educational system -- pre-school through adult.

The educational assessment of Maine's 1988 graduates offers some insight into the need for change when one notes that those students enrolled in business education and vocational education scored much lower on the average in comparison to those enrolled in college preparatory programs. These scores are not an indictment of the students enrolled in vocational education or even general education. They are, however, an indictment of the education offered these students in comparison to the education offered to their peers.

It is this educator's belief that we must allocate the necessary available resources to meet the needs of these students to ensure the greatest potential of each individual. To do so means change... an upgrading of the currently practiced nineteenth century educational philosophy which is trying to train and educate the citizens of the twenty-first century.

The observations and recommendations offered in this document are a compilation of thoughts and ideas derived through extensive research and are not solely those of the Associate Commissioner for Adult and Secondary Vocational Education.

It is my hope that the task force to study secondary vocational education in Maine will consider each observation and recommendation and incorporate this information into their deliberations as they move to formalize a plan which will enhance the lives and opportunities of those we serve.

TOWARD THE YEAR 2000

In his text, *A Place Called School*, Goodlad (1984) points out that the subjects most popular with students are the arts, physical education, and hands-on activities that involve students. This popularity is most closely replicated in high school by consumer/home economics, technology education, and vocational education classes.

Vocational Education is a viable mechanism for the preparation of life, whether it be to develop occupational or life skills. However, vocational education and education in general must change to meet the needs of a transforming society. These include:

- the need to readily adapt to a changing job market which will be essential for successful competition in a global economy;
- the need to develop transferable skills through broad occupational cluster programming, thus enhancing opportunities for employment and job flexibility;
- the need to address equity for all groups, understanding that the majority of workers in the year 2000 will be women and minorities;
- the need to develop a worker who understands that education and self-improvement is a lifelong process; and
- the need to develop citizens who possess not only the higher order skills of problem solving and analysis, but also possess the ability to read, communicate orally and in writing, and the ability to apply appropriate mathematical skills.

The changing society provides, not problems or pitfalls for Maine's secondary vocational education system, but tremendous opportunities for those we serve.

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Observation:

The following observations and recommendations offer opportunities to be considered in the reshaping of our educational process for the benefit of all Maine's learners regardless of their current position on the educational spectrum.

The Department of Educational and Cultural Services, more specifically the Bureau of Adult and Secondary Vocational Education, has not effectively utilized research or data collection capabilities to assist the department or local schools with measuring the effectiveness of existing programs or the development of new initiatives.

Recommendation:

The Bureau of Adult and Secondary Vocational Education should move to establish a comprehensive research section, complementing that of the department, to provide analytical data for use in evaluating existing programs and new initiatives.

Observation:

Many students currently enrolled in "general education" studies as well as recent graduates and dropouts, find themselves ill prepared to secure gainful employment.

Recommendation:

The Bureau of Adult and Secondary Vocational Education should establish a "Jobs for Maine's Future" program for both in-school youth and dropouts. This program would offer camaraderie and support for participants toward the attainment of gainful employment and the advancement within it.

Observation:

For Maine's students, career awareness is an exception more than the rule. Countless numbers of Maine's youth advance through the grades without a clear understanding of the life and occupational opportunities available to them.

All too often this lack of knowledge leads to an inappropriate course of study which ill prepares the student for initial continuing educational pursuits or subsequent occupational choices.

Recommendation:

Career education should and must be introduced into all levels of the K-12 curriculum and may be delivered through a variety of methods including:

- career awareness education through social studies and language arts curriculum in grades K-6;
- home/career skills education and introduction to technology education courses in grades 7 and 8 (should this be impossible, efforts should be made to offer these courses to students in grades 9 and 10); and
- students (with parental and school assistance) should develop an educational plan for learning prior to grade 9, leading to a "next-step" goal of preparation for employment, further education, or both (this plan should be revisited at least once a year by all parties to assure relevancy of study).

Observation:

The majority of Maine's vocational educators enter their positions without the benefit of a teacher preparatory program, thus placing great hardships upon themselves as they pursue their new-found career. Such entrance often leads to a less-than-desirable educational experience for both the instructor and the student.

Recommendation:

The Department of Educational and Cultural Services, Bureau of Adult and Secondary Vocational Education, should develop a plan to identify the in-service needs of Maine's vocational educators and develop strategies to address same. This plan should address, but not be limited to:

- basic instructional presentations;
- technical upgrading (e.g., staff industry exchange, educator-in-residence program);
- teaching the special needs student;
- competency-based curriculum and instructional development;

- introducing basic skills (reading, writing, communications, science, mathematics) into vocational instruction; and
- methods of overcoming the traditional sex bias and stereotyping.

Observation:

In recognition of the diverse educational background of the trade and industrial vocational educators, certification standards must reflect assessment of these skills and provide for the enhancement of basic teaching competencies.

Recommendation:

The following outline was developed by a broad-based forum of educators. The university is offered as an appropriate route to initial certification.

**Secondary
Vocational
Education
Certification**

Draft, 7/1/87

I. **Provisional Certification** (Two year non-renewable)

Teacher of all secondary vocational programs, with the exception of Business Education, who has not taught previously in the state.

- A. Possess a high school diploma or general equivalency diploma.
- B. Pass competency skills exam for area of certification (National Occupational Competencies Exam)
- C. Completion of learning experience:
 - 1. Apprenticeship training, or
 - 2. sixty semester credit hours, or
 - 3. three years of wage earning experience, or
 - 4. completion of vocational technical institute or technical college training in the discipline of certification sought.
- D. Three years of wage-earning experience at the journey worker level within the discipline of certification within the last five years, or a graduate of a four-year accredited degree-granting institution within the last ten years, majoring in the field of study in the vocational subject area to be taught.

- E. Possession of appropriate license or certificate.
- F. Endorsements. The provisional teacher certificate shall be issued with an endorsement which specifies the grades and subject area which the teacher is certified to teach. A holder of a provisional teacher certificate may not teach outside his/her area of endorsement unless he/she has received a waiver from the Commissioner in accordance with State Board rules. These endorsements shall not apply to teachers in private schools approved for attendance purposes only.

Observation:

Maine's answer to educational reform--Chapter 125, "Rules Governing Basic School Approval," and Chapter 127, "Instructional Requirements and Graduation Standards"--offers schools a unique opportunity for self-evaluation and improvement of their learners. Initial department review shows little substantive change or new direction for Maine's secondary vocational centers and regions.

Recommendation:

The Bureau of Adult and Secondary Vocational Education should be authorized to carefully review the literature for the purpose of developing strategies to implement change in the delivery of secondary vocational/occupational education. This project may take three years and involve financial subsidy to implement. Opportunities to consider may include:

- career/life planning;
- career assessment;
- diversified vocational programming for the special needs populace;
- cluster vocational programming;
- articulated vocational-technical programming (two-plus-one options with Maine's VTI system);
- introduction to occupations;

- job placement and follow-up services;
- research based program development; and
- targeted training.

Observation:

Title 20-A *Maine Revised Statutes Annotated*, Section 845, allows for the delivery of vocational education at the secondary level via centers, which are extensions of a host school, and vocational regions, which serve all schools in an area and are extensions of those schools. These systems seem to work well overall; however, there is room for improvement.

Recommendation:

Statutes should be reviewed to determine if they still reflect current needs for occupational education delivery. One issue might be the introduction of comprehensive vocational high schools in centers and regions where desired—thus providing an alternative for vocational delivery. Many states currently allow or are moving toward this approach (e.g., Rhode Island and Minnesota).

Observation:

The need for greater accountability in education is a state and national concern. Maine's secondary vocational education system has not been excluded. Institutions of higher learning, employers and the military expect greater skills and competencies from our graduates—not only in the skills area, but in the characteristics of a good employee (e.g., basic literacies, communication skills, and work attitudes).

In an informal conversation, a member of this task force (Mr. Parker Smith of Gould & Smith, Inc., Presque Isle, Maine) stated that he expects a high school or vocational graduate seeking employment to be able to present him/herself in a proper fashion and have the capacity to fill out an employment application without his secretary's assistance.

Recommendation:

Maine's secondary vocational education system must move immediately to competency-based education. This means that all instruction must relate directly to specific performance objectives based on current job tasks as identified by practitioners.

Observation:

The Maine State Department of Educational and Cultural Services, Bureau of Adult and Secondary Vocational Education, must take the lead in this endeavor by developing the core competencies for all vocational disciplines offered in this state to assure consistency. The bureau must provide in-service activities on competency-based curriculum development and implementation for the instructors.

Infused in these curricula must be those basic skills (employee attitudes) and integrated studies (reading comprehension, writing, mathematics) where appropriate. There must be dialogue with general education and higher educational institutions to assure relevant instruction.

Recent bureau initiatives have begun to address these issues (e.g., development of a full-time curriculum resource center housed at KVVTI, scheduled curriculum workshops, and competency identification sessions). But the task is great and will take time to evolve into a vital curriculum network. A network which instructs, measures, and informs the instructor, student, and prospective employer of the student's abilities through written and applied assessment.

The outcry for improved education often leads to an attempt to make improvements through the existing framework rather than establishing new directions.

Vocational education was conceived to meet the needs of an industrialized society. Today, vocational education needs to broaden its horizon to meet the needs of a more diverse economy requiring a variety of skills in its workers.

The development of balanced occupational programs would enable students to acquire broad, transferable skills for employment and personal use, in conjunction with learning job-specific skills. These programs would aid the student in adjusting to the changing workplace while recognizing the benefit and need of learning and retraining.

The most unique aspect of applied learning will still remain a major cornerstone in this new mode of delivery.

Recommendation:

This new vocational education delivery system would include:

- Secondary vocational school services/components that could or should be provided, such as:
 - * guidance and career counseling services complementing the services offered at the sending school while offering job seeking, retention, and search services (possibly the natural vehicle to monitor "Jobs for Maine's Future" clubs);
 - * related subject instructors to collaborate with sending school instructors on vocational curricula in the math, science and social studies integration project;
 - * developmental studies laboratories which assist the educationally disadvantaged youth in improvement of basic skills or the enhancement of vocational instruction; and
 - * special needs vocational programming (diversified occupations) designed to meet the needs of students who are not prepared to enter the general program or community-based learning experience. This program would develop an individual training plan leading to entrance into a general vocational education program or work experience.
- Cooperative education programs should complement existing programs by offering students experience in vocational training not available within the existing program offerings of the centers and regions. However, great care should be taken to assure quality training programs and field-based placement to assure relevance to the learning experience;
- Vocational programs should be evaluated on their effectiveness (employment, continuing education, and military placement) and relevancy to meeting the needs of the student and the local/state economy. These programs must develop job-specific and transferable skills in broad occupational areas;
- Cluster programming should be incorporated into vocational offerings to allow for broader occupational choice and enhanced opportunities for students.

This would be accomplished by attaining competencies within components of the cluster (e.g., mechanical trades: external mechanics, equipment operation/licensing, community-based learning experience);

- Youth organizations which develop leadership and community interaction skills should be an integral part of any vocational education delivery system;
- All vocational centers and regions and the Department of Educational and Cultural Services should develop aggressive career awareness and public information programs which enlighten those who may need, want, or benefit from vocational education offerings, thus providing for equal access to vocational programs;
- A concerted effort must be made by the Department of Educational and Cultural Services and local agencies to enhance the physical accessibility of our facilities, presenting no barriers to those handicapped individuals who wish access;
- One of the greatest investments any community can make is in its educational facilities and educators. Given this, it is imperative that every effort be made to maximize their use for as many hours and seasons as possible. Such usage can be accomplished via alternative scheduling, adult education, summer youth employment activities, etc.;
- Vocational centers and regions need to establish more and stronger collaboration with the private sector and other public agencies to capitalize on available resources affecting vocational initiatives.

SUMMARY STATEMENT

The previous observations and recommendations are by no means complete in their content or even resounding in their originality. However, they are offered to provoke thought which will lead to the development of new opportunities for Maine's learners and, more specifically, those enrolled in secondary vocational education.

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**OBSERVATIONS OF WILLIAM H. CASSIDY, ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER
BUREAU OF ADULT AND SECONDARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION**

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Few of the many reports and texts written on educational reform, beginning with the forerunner *A Nation At Risk*, offer concrete recommendations for the enhancement of those students who neither desire nor have the opportunity to pursue a baccalaureate credential. Little is said about their vocational preparation.

Nevertheless, many of our students will not enroll in college preparatory programs--nor should they. Many will enroll in the poorly defined general curricula, which may inadequately prepare students to take their rightful places as productive workers and citizens. Where might these students receive their preparation for their chosen employment pursuit? Might it be occupational/vocational education -- an educational discipline that is no less challenging or qualitative than college preparatory programs?

Goodlad, in his text, *A Place Called School*, 1984, sees vocational education as an important part of the secondary school curriculum...but, challenges us to be more rigorous in our expectations.

The 1985 report by the Committee for Economic Development lists ten imperatives for guiding educational reform, one of which addresses a crucial ingredient of Maine's secondary vocational education system. In preparing students for employment, we must "require problem solving skills, command of the English language (written, spoken), and the ability to acquire and apply new knowledge".

One report by Dr. Susan Sherman, *Education for Tomorrow's Jobs*, 1983, exemplifies the phenomenon shown in the April 1987 *Assessment of Maine's Grade Eleven Students*. "All too often preparation of college-bound high school students has...taken precedence over preparation for employment, with the unhappy result that vocational education (general) students have inadequate basic and occupational skills".

The Unfinished Agenda, a report developed by the National Commission on Secondary Vocational Education, reviewed secondary vocational education's role in light of the changing society and educational reform. The report states that the best preparation for life is not necessarily more academic courses or, more specifically, college preparatory programming. But it also tells us that vocational education must be concerned with the development of the total person. The narrow view of occupational training must be broadened to enrich and complement the entire educational experience of students.

Many national reports call for strong leadership to develop a timely and comprehensive vocational philosophy. The time is right and resources must be made available to assure equitable education for all, especially Maine's general and vocational education students. Effective vocational programs flourish in situations where the power brokers view vocational education as an important component of the education spectrum.